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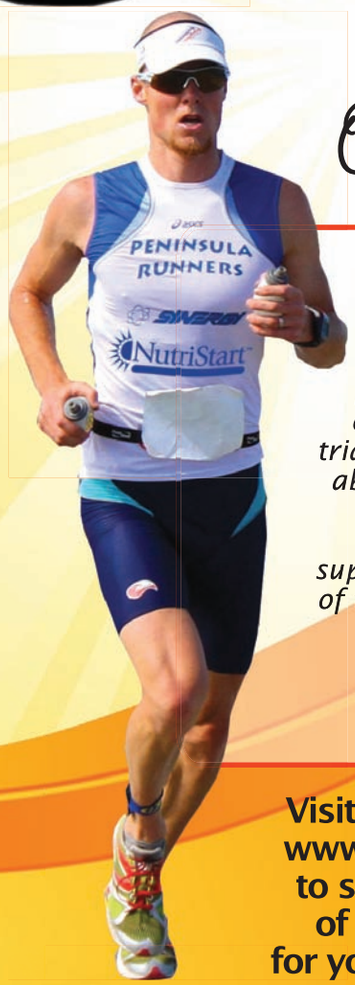

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2012
Year of The Water Dragon

Year of the Dragon 2012 is the fifth in the series following the Rabbit, recurring every twelfth year with the five elements effecting each dragon year differently. The date of each Chinese New Year varies with this one beginning January 23. In Chinese Mythology, the Dragon has always been an auspicious sign. The Water Dragon appears once-a-60 year cycle. See article by Kit Wong on page 33.

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Climate Summit overview

Governments at this year's climate negotiations in Durban failed to take any meaningful action on climate change, allowing emissions to rise to ever more dangerous levels. But if COP17 was an unprecedented failure, the civil disobedience was an unprecedented success.

The text produced at COP17, the 17th Conference of Parties – renamed the 'Conference of Polluters' by civil society – is even weaker than at previous negotiations. It is a death sentence for Africa and leaves our future as a giant question mark; governments need only take note of the science-based need to decrease emissions; they don't have to commit to real reductions.

The Canadian government was exceptionally regressive, meriting the title of "Pariah" on the world stage, primarily for formally withdrawing from Kyoto, an agreement that is becoming lifeless, as more countries refuse to fulfill their responsibilities. Canada and the US each earned the "Colossal Fossil" award for doing the most to block progress. Despite promising to reduce emissions in 1990, Canada has instead pumped out more.

Canada continues to expand the Tar Sands, which means 'game over' for the climate, recently approving a $9 billion-dollar mine in Fort McMurray and spending $1.4 billion dollars on subsidies each year to the industry.

The Minister of the Environment would not meet with the Canadian Youth Delegation, the group I am part of, or with various other environmental groups. Canada's so-called Minister of the Environment met instead with industry groups in the lead-up to Durban. This was also the first year the official Canadian delegation did not include members of the opposition parties.

Canada and the US each earned the "Colossal Fossil" award for doing the most to block progress.

For years, the oil industry has been pushing Canada to reject Kyoto and it is now clear money talks louder than the voices of concerned young people and citizens.

This year's COP was exciting because of the spirited civil society mobilizations, including a march of 5,000 people who demanded climate justice. The degree of direct action that took place on the inside climate negotiations was unprecedented this year.

Hundreds of the world's youth occupied the building in which negotiations took place. Some planted themselves in front of the UN plenary and refused to move until countries guaranteed fair, ambitious, and legally binding action on climate change. Fifteen people were kicked out and two people were arrested.

A young woman disrupted the speech by the US's climate envoy, publicly stating she feared for her future and calling on her government to act now. She was thrown out of the UN by security.

While people power did not change the outcome, it helped to build public pressure. I joined with six young people from Canada to stand up during Canada's Environment Minister's address to the UN plenary and to then turn our backs on him because the Canadian government has turned their back on us. We received more applause from the world's delegates than our Environment Minister.

After being removed by security from the United Nations, a South African woman called out "*Amandla*." This was a Zulu chant used during the movement against the apartheid system. Our response was the traditional "*Awethu*," meaning the power is ours.

One person can disobey civilly; hundreds of people can disobey civilly, but when millions of us take direct action and pressure the government to shift to an alternative path, a safe and equitable future can become possible.

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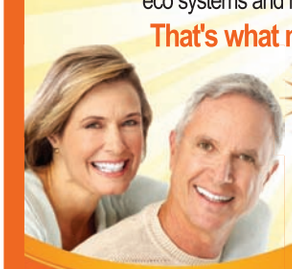

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The people's briefing note on prescription drugs

A deadly rush to market

I was interviewing a hospital physician in Ontario and we were discussing a drug that had recently been approved in Canada to prevent strokes and its potential to cause excessive bleeding. I knew something was wrong with this new drug, but I didn't know how wrong until I was halfway through my interview. It was her mention of the experience of emergency room physicians that caught me off guard.

"Everyone knows of a patient who has drained the blood bank," she said.

I was floored. What was she talking about? It took me a while to figure out the side effects of the new drug, an anticoagulant called dabigatran – Pradax in Canada and Pradaxa in the US – was capable of some serious stuff, particularly uncontrollable bleeding.

Anticoagulants work to stop blood from clotting and because blood clots can cause strokes, taking drugs to prevent clots can be very helpful. Dabigatran, which was approved in Canada to prevent strokes in November 2010, is the first of a number of new drugs poised to replace warfarin or Coumadin, a standby that doctors have used for decades. Some call it rat poison, as it is also used for that purpose.

The problem is not that this new drug causes unwanted bleeding, which warfarin can do as well, just ask the rats, but it can be extremely difficult to stop the bleeding once started. While Warfarin's action can be effectively reversed with an antidote of vitamin K, with dabigatran, sometimes there is no easy way to stop an unwanted bleed.

Bleeding to death is not pretty; nor are cerebrovascular accidents also known as strokes. If there is a disruption to the blood supply to your brain, you can rapidly lose brain function. Such disruption is usually due to a blockage, (about 80% of strokes involve a blocked blood supply to the brain) or leakage (where blood leaks out), which also disrupts brain function.

About 15% of all strokes are caused by atrial fibrillation (AF), an irregular heartbeat that is very common in the elderly, who are usually treated with warfarin. With over five million warfarin prescriptions written every year in Canada, it is a major drug market.

In addition to dabigatran, several other anticoagulants are trying to get a toehold on that atrial fibrillation market including apixaban (Eliquis) and rivaroxaban (Xarelto). Since dabigatran is the first warfarin replacement out of the starting gates, it has undergone the most scrutiny.

The drive to find a drug to replace warfarin focuses not on effectiveness, but on convenience. Warfarin is effective, but a royal hassle for many patients. It has a "narrow therapeutic window," sometimes delivering too much or too little of its blood-thinning effect. It requires frequent monitoring, lots of needles, trips to the clinic and the lab, drug dose adjustments, etc. It also reacts with some foods and many other drugs causing some patients such aggravation they forgo it altogether. Thus a market is created.

Like any new drug, there are pros and cons to dabigatran versus warfarin. Both will reduce your risk of a stroke by about the same margin, yet the key study of dabigatran, the RE-LY trial, found patients on dabigatran had a 1% lower rate of intracranial haemorrhage (bleeding within the skull) compared to those taking warfarin. Compared to warfarin, dabigatran increased heart attacks by about 0.4% and gastrointestinal bleeding by 0.6%. About 1% more dabigatran patients stopped their drug because of a serious adverse effect. The bottom line: dabigatran, at about 10 times the price ($1.70 per day vs. 18 cents per day for warfarin), does not save any additional lives.

The cost implication of people switching their anticoagulant is huge. If BC patients currently on warfarin are switched to dabigatran, it would cost BC patients and drug plans about $50 million more per year. Is it worth it?

Before answering that, you have to consider the cost of treating patients who experience things like unstoppable bleeding. It's hard to quantify how often patients bleed excessively on dabigatran but a recent report from *Quarterwatch*, which analyzes adverse drug reaction reports in the US, noted that, after dabigatran was approved in the US (in October 2010), it "moved to near the top of our adverse event rankings, with more reports than 98.7% of the drugs we regularly monitor." The *Quarterwatch* analysis found the problems mostly centred on the drug's clotting mechanism, finding both excessive bleeding (not enough clotting) and blood clots in the legs or lungs (too much clotting). Hmm, maybe the regular monitoring of warfarin doesn't seem like a bad idea after all?

The canary in this coalmine is the experience in New Zealand. Last July, in a twist no one can explain, dabigatran was rapidly given full, unrestricted coverage by the New Zealand's Pharmac, the national drug plan. Pharmac has an international reputation of playing hardball with the drug companies on prices and it often severely restricts the coverage for new drugs. So what was it thinking with such a hasty decision in favour of coverage for dabigatran, a budget-busting treatment with minimal advantages over warfarin and very real safety concerns?

It's almost certain New Zealand haggled and got a very cheap price. Maybe the manufacturer, Boehringer Ingelheim (BI), gave them additional sweetheart deals. We won't ever know this, as those deals are secret. Maybe the NZ government is striving to entice the US into opening up better bilateral trade relations and it plans to do so by impressing the drug industry. In a press release last June, Pharmac's medical director stated, "Funding dabigatran is an exciting step forward for anticoagulation treatment in this country. It is literally a game-changer and demonstrates Pharmac's desire to move relatively swiftly to fund genuinely innovative medicines."

Yet Pharmac has come under fire for being a little too swift. Within two months of being on the market, the New Zealand's Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring had amassed around 50 reports of people bleeding, linked to dabigatran. And there were some deaths. One newspaper reported, "Critics are alarmed at the way it has been rushed on to the market," also noting Pharmac's deal with BI was worth upwards of $100 million.

By November 2011, BI announced there were now up to 260 cases of fatal bleeding linked to dabigatran, while maintaining the number was smaller than if the patients had been taking warfarin.

Back here in Canada, early reports suggest how much we love this new drug. For example, dabigatran was awarded the 2011 Prix Galien Canada award, the "most prestigious award in Canadian pharmaceutical research and innovation." Accepting the award, the president of the Canadian arm of BI said, "We believe our innovation will transform the way patients with atrial fibrillation are managed in Canada."

Transform indeed. But in what way? By cutting secret deals with drug plans to cover a drug that is 10 times more expensive than its alternative, even as safety warnings pile up and patients in emergency rooms drain blood banks?

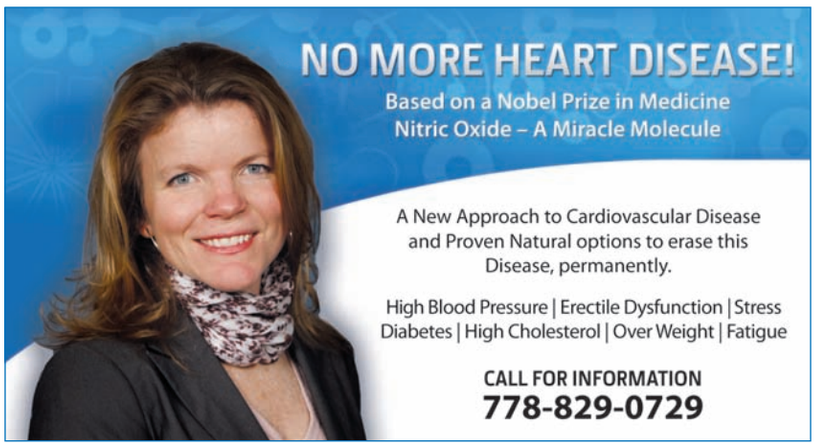
Early in 2012, BC and other provinces will decide whether to list dabigatran for public coverage. After recently replacing its drug benefits committee with a new model (and sidelining UBC's Therapeutics Initiative), BC's decision will be a bit of a test. Will BC follow New Zealand's example and cover dabigatran without conditions? Has anyone on the new committee read the Therapeutics Initiative's analysis on dabigatran, in which it cited the drug as "premature, pharmacologically irrational and unsafe for many patients?"

With the air of revolt swirling worldwide, maybe in 2012 we will see a revolt by emergency room physicians and surgeons who are tired of seeing our public blood banks being drained away due to this new drug?

Or will the patients themselves, tired of being part of some drug company's "game-changing" strategy, revolt and say "no thank you" to the chance of substituting one kind of disease for another?

It's a new year and time will tell.

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria and author of the forthcoming book **Seeking Sickness: Medical Screening and the Misguided Hunt for Disease,** due out April 2012.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Airport scanners radiation safety tests rigged

Fabricating evidence to stay in business

It can now be revealed by NaturalNews that the TSA [Transportation Security Administration] faked its safety data on its X-ray airport scanners in order to deceive the public about the safety of such devices. As evidenced by recent events in Washington, we now live in an age where the federal government simply fakes whatever documents, news or evidence it wants people to believe, then releases that information as if it were fact. This is the modus operandi of the Department of Homeland Security, which must fabricate false terror alerts to keep itself in business – and now the TSA division has taken the fabrication of false evidence to a whole new level with its naked body scanners.

The evidence of the TSA's fakery is now obvious, thanks to the revelations of a letter signed by five professors from the University of California, San Francisco and Arizona State University. You can view the full text of the letter at: http://www.propublica.org/documents

The letter reveals:

• To this day, there has been no credible scientific testing of the TSA's naked body scanners. The claimed "safety" of the technology by the TSA is based on rigged tests.

• The testing that did take place was done on a custom combination of spare parts rigged by the manufacturer of the machines (Rapiscan) and didn't even use the actual machines installed in airports. In other words, the testing was rigged.

• The names of the researchers who conducted the radiation tests at Rapiscan have been kept secret. This means the researchers are not available for scientific questioning of any kind and there has been no opportunity to even ask whether they are qualified to conduct such tests. (Are they even scientists?)

TSA operates in complete secrecy

None of the Rapiscan tests have been available to be subjected to peer review. They are quite literally secret tests using secret techniques engineered by secret researchers. We the people apparently have no right to see the data or the methodology or even the names of the researchers who supposedly carried out these safety tests. The final testing report produced from this fabricated testing scenario has been so heavily redacted that "there is no way to repeat any of these measurements," say the professors. In other words, the testing violates the very first tenant of scientific experimentation, which is that all experiments must be repeatable in order to be verified as accurate.

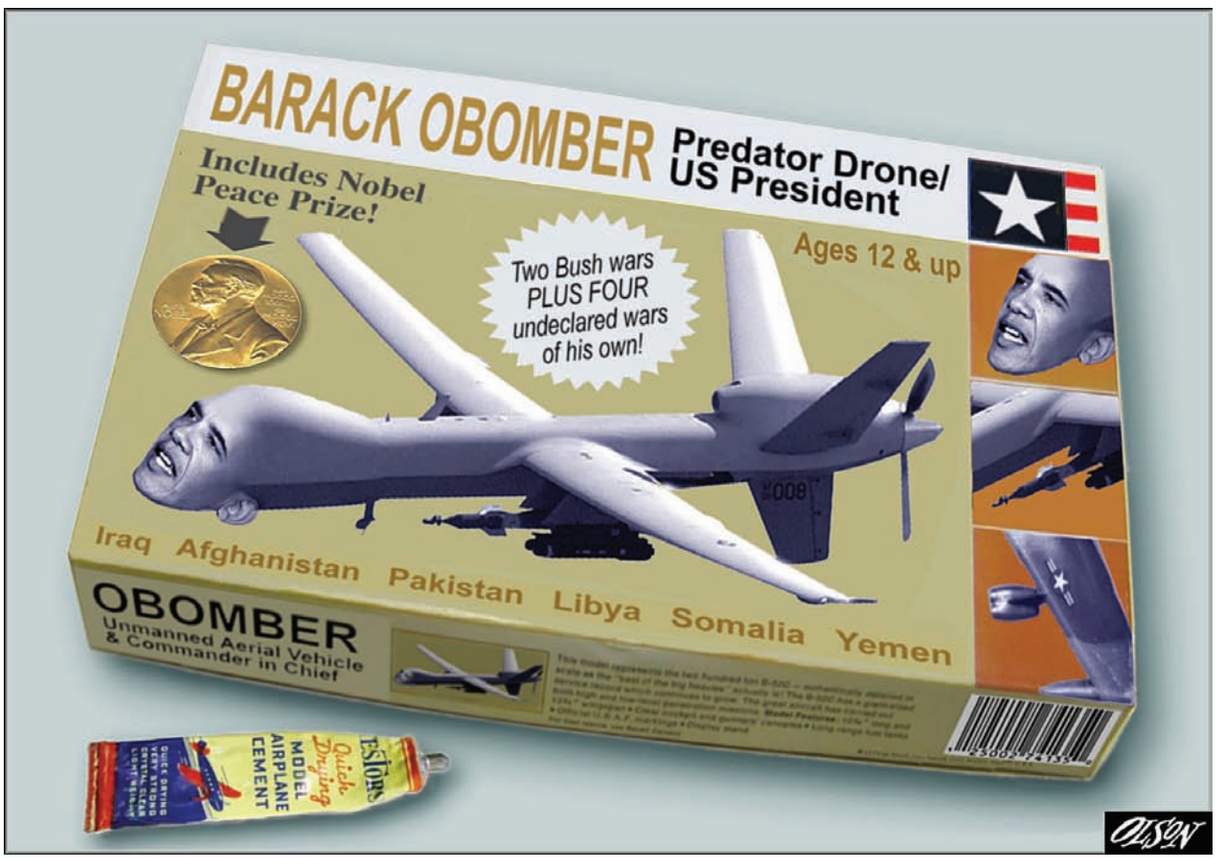
As the professors state in their letter, the document is heavily redacted with red stamps over the words and figures. In every case, the electric current used which correlates one-to-one with X-ray dose has been specifically redacted. Thus, there is no way to repeat any of these measurements. While the report purports to present the results of objective testing, in fact the JHU APL personnel, who are unnamed anywhere in the document either as experimenters or as authors, were not provided with a machine by Rapiscan. Instead, they were invited to the manufacturing site to observe a mock-up of components (spare parts) that were said to be similar to those that are parts of the Rapiscan system. The tests were performed by the manufacturer using the manufacturer's questionable test procedures.

> The testing that did take place was done on a custom combination of spare parts rigged by the manufacturer of the machines (Rapiscan) and didn't even use the actual machines installed in airports.

Where is the outrage from the "scientific" community on all this? This quack science TSA testing is so atrociously and inexcusably bad that, if this fabricated evidence were presented at any sort of scientific meeting, they would be laughed off the stage and publicly vilified in the media.

Read the complete article at www.commonground.ca http://www.naturalnews.com/032425_airport_scanners_radiation.html#ixzz1b3vpxygM

Mike Adams, also known as the HealthRanger, is the co-creator of NaturalNews.TV (www.naturalnews.com) Reprinted with permission from NaturalNews.TV



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Farm of the future

Rebecca Hosking grew up on a beef and dairy farm in Devon where she fell in love with wildlife and then went on to become a wildlife filmmaker. With her father and uncle both beyond retirement and struggling to keep the farm going, Rebecca decided to return to her roots and take over the operation of the farm. There was only one problem – farming had become dependant on a mechanized system that used fossil fuels intensively. How could she afford to operate her small family farm as the global oil supply ran out and the price went sky high?

Rebecca recalled her elderly Devon neighbour, who only farmed her land using two horses and a cart (equalling two horsepower of energy). Today, one tractor has the impact of 400 horses – 400 horsepower. Rebecca recognized that bringing the hay in to feed the cows in winter demanded the highest use of fossil fuels on the farm so she set out to discover how Fordhall Organic Farm in Shropshire could leave cows out to pasture all winter.

Her father Arthur, who passed away in 2005, had been a revolutionary farmer and against all convention, he believed "ploughing a field was like ripping skin off a human." He knew that leaf litter and the upper layers of soil teemed with life – worms, fungi and bacteria – and that every time the soil was ploughed, all that life was destroyed. Leaving the soil undisturbed creates a wildlife-rich, diversified meadow with many species of grass, some of which fed Arthur's cattle year-round.

If we left nature alone, we know she would soon reforest the land. How then could we farm and produce food? Rebecca discovered permaculture addresses this question by creating plant communities in a nature-inspired design. Edible and desirable species are encouraged; soil is undisturbed so soil fertility is high; wildlife is diversified and abundant and every plant serves a unique purpose, keeping the ecosystem healthy and in balance.

photo © Brian Sedgbeer

Rebecca visited a forest farm where, by utilizing the full height of trees and shrubs, thriving hedgerows were more productive than the fields they surrounded. Fruiting species such as mulberries, meddlers, quinces, apples and pears grew in abundance, as well as nut trees such as sweet chestnuts and hazelnuts. Nut trees are more sustainable than cereal crops; one acre of land can produce two tons of sweet chestnuts. Rebecca even discovered that cattle will eat shrubs and trees and are particularly fond of ash so controlling hedgerows produces fodder for cows.

When the oil runs out, is this what the farm of the future will look like – farmers living on smallholdings, producing food in clearings surrounded by woodlands, leaving most of the work to nature? What a joyful and harmonious scenario that would be, compared to fields of poisoned and degraded soil, lacking any habitat and food for wildlife, producing cheap food that not only costs the Earth, but that also has become a threat to human health and our very survival. See Rebecca's vision in the documentary *A Natural World: A Farm for the Future* at http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/farm-for-the-future/ Happy New Year 2012!

Carolyn Herriot is author of **The Zero Mile Diet, a Year-round Guide to Growing Organic Food** and **A Year on the Garden Path, a 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide** (Harbour Publishing). http://earthfuture.com/gardenpath/

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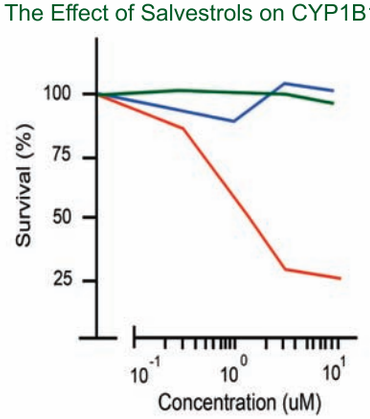


Warm winter fare

In creating recipes, it is my great pleasure to collaborate with expert chef Joseph Forest; the process allows me to improve my sensory awareness of food, something dietitian training didn't include. During our exchanges, Joseph has become fascinated with the field of nutrition, which I bring to the table, and our collaboration has resulted in the new book *Cooking Vegetarian*. (J. Forest and V. Melina, Wiley Canada, 2011)

While working as a banquet chef for the Four Seasons hotel, Joseph gained an understanding of the textures and layers of flavour that combine to make a fine soup. (www.josephforest.com) Winter is a great time to savour the aroma and flavours of soup and the recipes below offer a warm welcome to anyone coming in from the cold. Alternatively, you'll have enough left over for several days or to freeze for later use. Both of these soups are low in oil and they provide abundant nutrition; they can also help you slim down after the rich fare of the holiday season. Serve them with crackers or fresh bread.

Ginger, carrot and yam soup Makes 9 cups

Certain vitamins and protective phytochemicals in vegetables provide the splendid array of colours you see when you walk down the produce aisle. Three vitamins are bright yellow: riboflavin, folate and vitamin A, also known as beta-carotene. This warming, golden soup is packed with all three.

1 tablespoon coconut oil or olive oil
1/2 small onion, sliced
1/4 cup peeled, chopped ginger
4 cups water
4 cups chopped carrots
2 cups peeled and chopped yam
1 med. orange, peeled, seeded & chopped
2 teaspoons whole coriander seed or 1 teaspoon ground coriander
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon allspice
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 cup apple juice

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat and cook the onions for 3-5 minutes or until tender. Add the water, carrots, yams, orange, coriander, salt, allspice and nutmeg and bring to a boil; reduce heat, cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until the carrots and yams are soft. Transfer the soup to a blender and blend until smooth. Return the soup to the pot, add the apple juice and reheat.

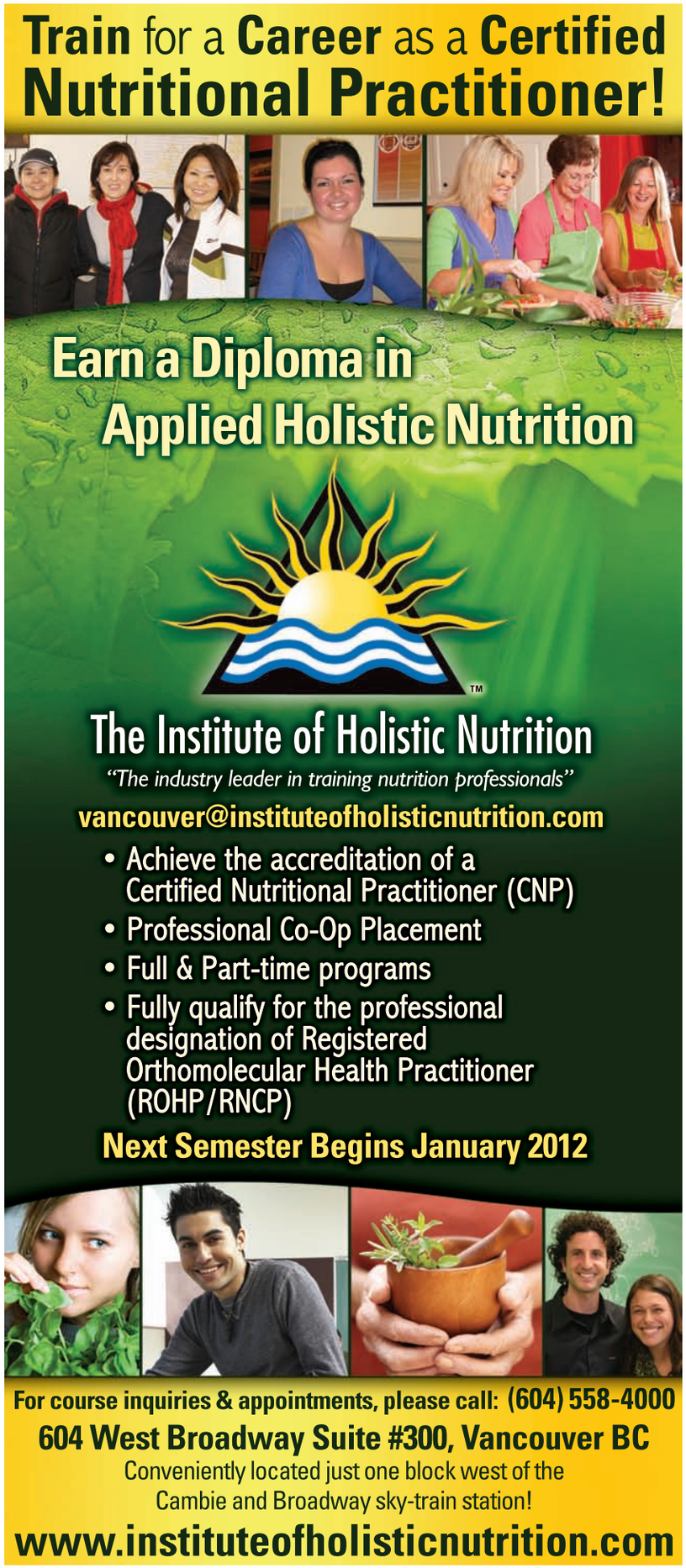
Red lentil miso soup Makes 6 1/2 cups

Miso is a Japanese fermented paste made from soybeans, salt and grain – most commonly rice or barley – and a living culture that is used to initiate the fermentation process. The nutrient-rich soybeans are made more digestible by fermentation. Miso can be used to flavour many different dishes such as gravies, dressings, dips and soups.

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1/2 onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups diced carrot
5 cups water
1 cup red lentils
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin seed
2 tablespoons miso
1/2 teaspoon salt

Heat oil in a pot over medium heat and cook the onions for 3-5 minutes or until tender. Add the garlic, carrots and cook for 3 minutes. Add water, lentils, cumin, bring to boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for 20-25 minutes or until lentils have disintegrated. Mix miso and salt in a small bowl along with a small amount of the liquid from the soup. Stir mixture until smooth, add it to the soup and serve.

Vesanto Melina is a Langley dietitian and author (www.nutrispeak.com). **Saturday January 28: Meet Vesanto at an author event** at Wendel's Bookstore and Café in Fort Langley, 3-7PM, www.wendelsonline.com. While you're there, treat yourself to a warming bowl of soup.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Facts on prescription drug deaths and the drug industry

Terence Young, Member of Parliament for Oakville, Ontario, is the founder and Chair of Drug Safety Canada, a research and public advocacy organization based in Oakville. He has been active in issues related to prescription drug safety since March 2000, after losing his 15-year-old daughter Vanessa to the Johnson & Johnson manufactured drug Prepulsid, marketed by Janssen-Ortho Inc.

Prescription drugs taken as prescribed in hospitals are the fourth leading cause of death in the US and Canada, after cancer, heart disease and strokes. They cause about 10,000 deaths a year in Canada and about 106,000 deaths a year and over two million serious injuries in the US. As many as another 10,000 deaths a year in Canada are thought to occur outside hospitals due to the wrong drug, dosage errors and adverse reactions. One out of four admissions to internal medicine in Canadian hospitals is related to prescription drugs, of which 70% are preventable. Canadians now spend more on prescription drugs ($24 billion) than we do on doctors ($18 billion).

All drugs cause adverse effects. The only difference between a drug and a poison is dosage. Many drugs are marketed at dosages that are risky for many patients, referred to as a narrow therapeutic index. Sixteen major drugs have been pulled off the North American market since 1997 for injuring or killing patients including the drug that killed Vanessa Young – Prepulsid. Vioxx alone may have killed 55,000-65,000 patients before being withdrawn by the manufacturer, Merck, in 2004.

Over-the-counter drugs also cause many deaths. Every year, more than 15,000 patients die in North America from ordinary aspirin and Ibuprofen. Tylenol is the cause of thousands of hospital admissions and hundreds of deaths annually in North America.

Patient information leaflets are dangerous because they create a false sense of security, listing only minor adverse reactions. Drug labels are 30-50 pages of fine print, written by lawyers. Very few doctors ever read them. Those who do are often confused. Instead, they get their drug information from commissioned 'detail reps' who exaggerate the effectiveness of the drugs and play down the risks.

Most doctors get the rest of their drug information at Continuing Medical Education conferences or meetings held at expensive restaurants, resorts or on exotic trips sponsored by the drug companies. Big pharma spends upwards of $20,000 per doctor a year to create debts of gratitude. Doctors do not believe these gifts affect their prescribing habits; a drug rep's dream.

Doctors in North America accept $ 4 billion per year in free samples of the newest and most expensive drugs and use them to create debts of gratitude in their patients. Since most illnesses get better on their own and the placebo effect works 30-70% of the time, patients believe the samples worked and begin buying them unnecessarily, sometimes for life.

Specialists are paid up to $20,000 per patient to enroll patients in drugs trials out of their offices. They have to mention that this is a trial, but are not required to tell the patients they are being paid to do so. A specialist can make up to $2 million on the side out of their office with 100 patients and never have to tell them they are being treated like a canary in a mine in exchange for money.

All drugs must be approved as safe and effective by Health Canada. To get approved, new drugs do not have to be proven more effective or even as effective as the existing bestseller for that condition. They only have to be proven slightly more effective than a sugar pill (placebo). Yet every new drug has new adverse effects. So there is often little chance the benefits will outweigh the risks. No one tells the patients.

By the time Vanessa Young died from Prepulsid, there had been five label changes over 10 years, yet sales had kept growing to $1 billion per year.

Safe does not mean safe by any measurable standard. Safe is a moving target. Safe means that the benefits of the drug outweigh the risks for the population the drug is intended to treat and for its intended use. However, 70% of doctors, with the direct encouragement and illegal promotion of the 'detail reps' prescribe drugs off-label, for uses the drugs were never approved for – the cause of most drug deaths. Few patients understand the risks they are assuming when they agree to off-label use.

A drug considered safe today can be considered not safe tomorrow if the drug company comes up with a new drug to replace a bestseller. Safe is an arbitrary standard set by drug companies and Health Canada based on what they have to sell. That leads to hundreds of injuries and deaths. No one tells the patients. Drugs are proven safe after four phases of testing. Phase four is selling a new drug on the open market. Any patient taking a new drug is becoming part of a giant drug trial. Because no one ever tells the patients, they can't provide an informed consent.

Pharmaceutical companies are not required to report adverse reactions to their drugs using worldwide totals and only report the injuries and deaths that occur in each jurisdiction, a much smaller number. Safety information is viewed as "commercial secrets." This makes it impossible for regulators to determine how dangerous the drugs truly are.

The information Health Canada analyzes to review/approve new drugs is kept secret, preventing independent researchers from reviewing it or challenging it; the same information that is routinely published on the FDA website.

The Canadian Pharmacists Association reported to the Romanow Commission that between $2-$9 billion per year is wasted on the overuse and misuse of prescription drugs. Doctors simply do not report adverse drug reactions (less than 1% is reported). This lack of data prevents regulators from spotting killers and getting risky drugs off the market before they injure or kill many patients. Drug labels often report a number of adverse drug reactions, which is about 1/100th of the reality, making patients victims of their doctor's reporting negligence.

In Ontario, under the current Coroner's Act, all prescription and over-the-counter drug deaths are identified as "natural." This keeps everyone off the hook legally.

Drug companies take adverse drug reaction reports and manipulate the data before reporting them to their 'partners' at Health Canada, usually blaming the patient by assuming (often with no evidence) it was an overdose, the patient had a previously undiagnosed 'condition' or they were a "poor metabolizer." They never conclude there is anything wrong with the drug itself. If they are unable to blame the patient, they simply change the label, which few doctors ever read, adding a new "contraindication" in the fine print. By the time Vanessa Young died from Prepulsid, there had been five label changes over 10 years, yet sales had kept growing to $1 billion per year.

Since the 1960s, 41 drugs have been taken off the Canadian market, many or most for injuring or killing patients. No one at Health Canada has even kept a record of why these drugs were withdrawn. Drugs crash, as planes do. No one would ask Air Canada to investigate its own crashes. The independent Transportation Safety Board does that. So why do we ask Health Canada to investigate its crashes?

Beginning in 1997, Health Canada was directed to support the pharmaceutical industry as a 'partner' in health care. They have done so by supporting the industry agenda: increasing drug approvals and sales by promoting "Smart Regulation" *continued p.34...*

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Misdiagnosing ADHD

Kids can't be kids anymore?

There's a popular T-shirt that reads, "I don't have ADHD, I'm just ignoring you." We all know that ADHD is no laughing matter, yet, as with much humour, there's a grain of truth in the joke.

illustration © Kirsty Pargeter

It's axiomatic that Americans are addicted to pharmaceutical drugs. Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation*, writes in his review of *Overdosed America* by Dr. John Abramson, "some of the nation's worst drug dealers aren't peddling on the street corners, they're occupying corporate suites. *Overdosed America* reveals the greed and corruption that drive health care costs skyward and now threatens the public health. Before you see a doctor, you should read this book."

According to Dr. Abramson, "This is the mother of all sleights of hand: the transformation of medical science from a public good whose purpose is to improve health into a commodity whose primary function is to maximize financial returns."

Nothing illustrates this more disturbingly than new research by Todd Elder, an assistant professor of economics at Michigan State University. According to Elder, almost one million children in the US are possibly misdiagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder simply because they are the youngest in their class. Immaturity is therefore mistaken for ADHD. These children are significantly more likely than their older classmates to be prescribed behaviour-modifying stimulants such as Ritalin. Elder said the "smoking gun" of the study is that ADHD diagnoses depend on a child's age relative to classmates and the teacher's perceptions of whether the child has symptoms.

"If a child is behaving poorly, if he's inattentive, if he can't sit still, it may simply be because he's five and the other kids are six," said Elder. "There's a big difference between a five-year-old and a six-year-old, and teachers and medical practitioners need to take that into account when evaluating whether children have ADHD."

ADHD is the most commonly diagnosed behavioural disorder for kids in the US, with at least 4.5 million diagnoses among children under age 18, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

However, as Elder has noted, there are no neurological markers for ADHD (such as a blood test) and experts disagree on its prevalence, fuelling intense public debate about whether ADHD is under-diagnosed or over-diagnosed.

In 2000, a series of Ritalin class action federal lawsuits were filed in five separate US states. All five lawsuits were dismissed by the end of 2002. The lawsuits alleged the makers of Methylphenidate (Ritalin) and the American Psychiatric Association had conspired to invent and promote the disorder ADHD to create a highly profitable market for the drug. The lawsuit also alleged CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) deliberately attempted to increase the supply of Ritalin and ease restrictions on the supply of Ritalin to help increase profits for Novartis. Indeed, some even argue that ADHD is merely a disease manufactured by the pharmaceutical industry to sell drugs.

ADHD is the most commonly diagnosed behavioural disorder for kids in the US, with at least 4.5 million diagnoses among children under age 18, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Fred Baughman, MD, has been an adult and child neurologist in California for nearly 40 years. He leads the opposition to the over and misdiagnoses of ADHD. Dr. Baughman has been striving for many years to bring the truth about this so-called 'disease' to the attention of as many people as possible. In his book, *The ADHD Fraud*, he writes, "They made a list of the most common symptoms of emotional discomfiture of children; those which bother teachers and parents most, and in a stroke that could not be more devoid of science or Hippocratic motive – termed them a 'disease.' Twenty-five years of research, not deserving of the term 'research,' has failed to validate ADD/ADHD as a disease. Tragically – the 'epidemic' having grown from 500,000 in 1985 to between five and seven and million today – this remains the state of the 'science' of ADHD."

Dr. Mercola, founder of mercola.com, an online natural health newsletter, raises concern about "the frightening rise of ADHD drugs among children and their parents." Mercola writes, "Parents of children already taking such medications are almost 10 times more likely to take one themselves. Even worse, some 60 percent were mothers, although ADHD had been thought to be almost three times more common among males."

These dire numbers come from a review of prescription claims generated by more than 100,000 children (ages 5-19) and their parents in 2005 by Medco Health Solutions. More alarming statistics:

- The chances of a second child in the same family taking an ADHD drug doubled when a parent also took one.
- In cases where both parent and child took an ADHD drug, parents began drug therapy first more than 40 percent of the time.
- Adults began taking an ADHD drug at age 43 while children start at age 13.
- According to an earlier Medco analysis, ADHD drug use among women had exploded 164 percent from 2000-05.

According to Mercola, "There's no need to expose your family or yourself to a potentially hazardous ADHD drug that can cause hallucinations, especially when there are safer and more natural solutions available. A few to consider:

- Avoid processed foods.
- Rebalance your intake of omega-3 fats by taking a high quality fish or krill oil daily.
- Reduce, with the plan to eliminate, grains and sugars from your diet.

So is ADHD real or not? The 'disease' has been attributed to anything from pesticide exposure to too much television. The jury is still out, but parents are advised to at least get a second opinion before drugging their child, especially if he or she is among the youngest in the class.

References:

Overdosed America: The Broken Promise of American Medicine by John Abramson, MD.

The ADHD Fraud by Fred Baughman, MD.

Based in Ladysmith, BC, **Bruce Burnett** is a chartered herbalist, an award-winning writer and author of **HerbWise: growing cooking wellbeing.**

Restoring Eden

The federal government has announced an exciting NIMBY project. It will put nature in millions of backyards by establishing Canada's first urban National Park in the country's largest urban area.

Nestled in the east end of the Greater Toronto Area, Rouge National Park will be unlike any other. It won't offer the panoramas of Jasper or Banff or provide a safe haven for polar bears, like Manitoba's Wapusk National Park, or be larger than some European countries, like Wood Buffalo National Park. But it *will* help connect urban dwellers with nature and ultimately protect and restore a once great forest.

Rouge National Park will be established within the heart of one of the fastest growing urban areas in North America. Home to a wealth of plant and animal life – snapping turtles, butternut trees and rare wetland flowers – the area's significant and growing human footprint is already evident: two major highways, nearby housing estates and stormwater drainage. Managing existing and future infrastructure in the park, especially roads, will be critical so the growth and spread of surrounding suburbs won't adversely impact its sensitive ecology.

Nestled in the east end of the Greater Toronto Area, Rouge National Park will… help connect urban dwellers with nature and ultimately protect and restore a once great forest.

Restoring the Rouge's once verdant Carolinian and Great Lakes forest canopy will be important because a long history of agricultural land use and timber harvesting has dramatically reduced the amount of old and mature forest in the area. Intact mature and old-growth forests are rare in northeastern North America, making up less than one percent of forested land.

Plant surveys conducted since the early 1900s in southern Ontario, the Maritimes and New England have found, for example, that some plants, like American yew, do well in undisturbed forests but are so sensitive to human land use that they are often absent or rare in recovering second-growth forests. Scientists believe these plants are not able to fully recover in abandoned farm fields or old logging sites, even after hundreds of years, because habitat is no longer suitable.

Given the importance of these habitat features to the recovery of forest plants and animals, Parks Canada, in partnership with local community groups, regional conservation authorities, universities, and others, will need to work to restore areas in Rouge Park by planting indigenous tree species, removing invasive species, and, in some places, re-introducing and re-creating, by hand, the special features that are largely missing from the park, such as old dead logs, mounds and pits and vernal ponds.

Much of this restoration work is already underway. A local conservation group, Friends of the Rouge Watershed, has planted more than 100,000 native trees and wildflowers in a monumental effort to reforest a section of the park that was set aside in honour of the late Bob Hunter, who helped start Greenpeace and is considered the father of the modern environmental movement in Canada. The group now hopes to restore critical features – old logs, ponds and other habitat – in Bob Hunter Memorial Park as well as in other nearby Rouge Park sites.

It's a fitting tribute to the memory of a great environmental hero and a wonderful gift to the people of Toronto, and indeed, all of Canada, who will see the lustre restored to this once great forest. Spending time in nature is good for physical and mental health. Having a National Park in the city's backyard will offer benefits for generations to come.

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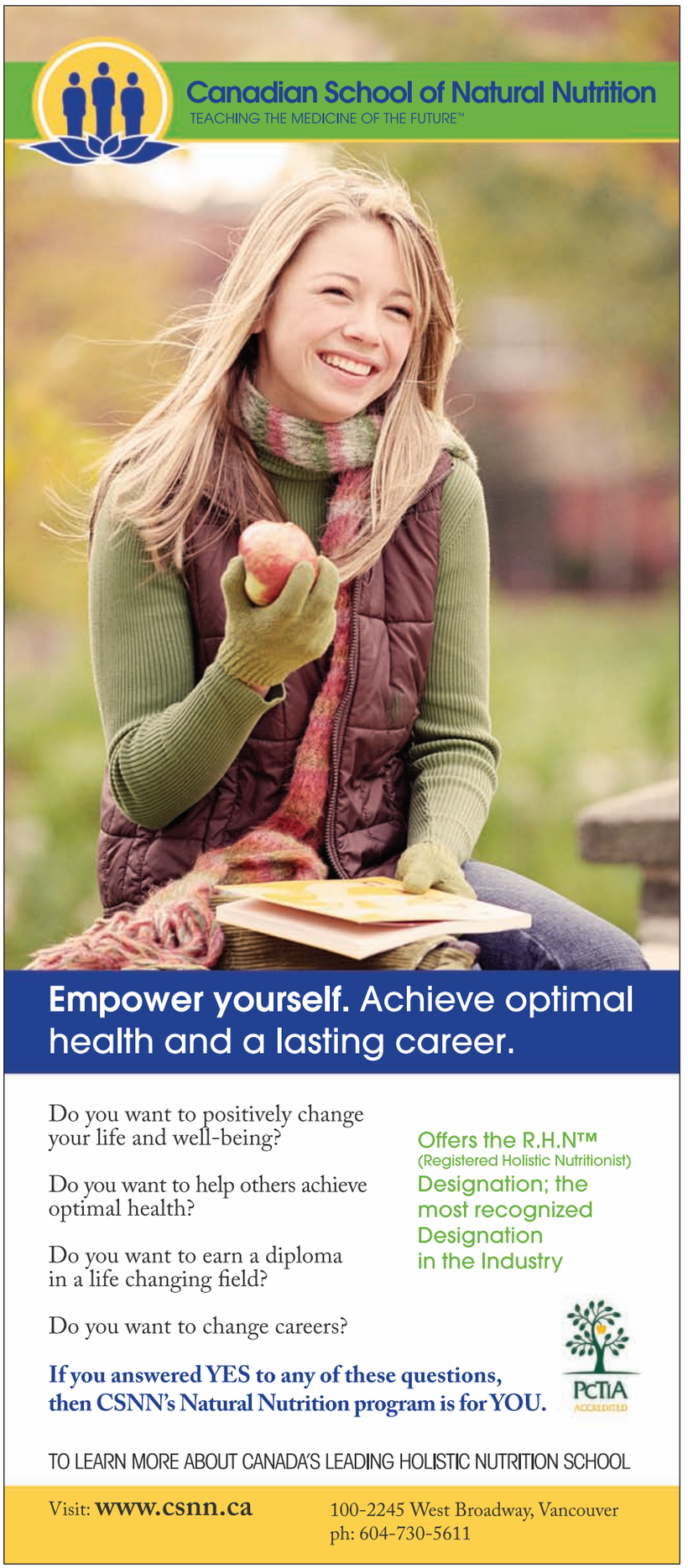
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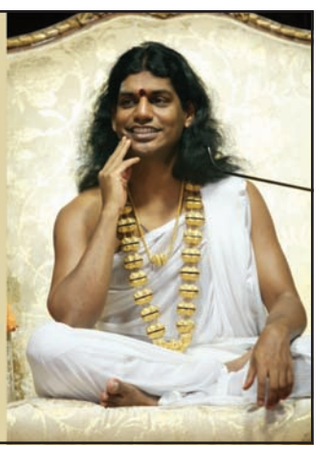

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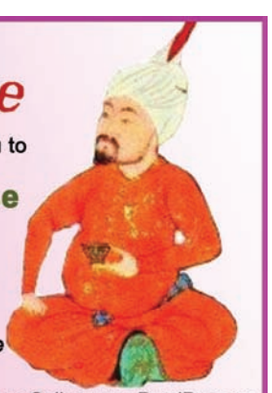
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Happy New Year! common ground

Just now

an interview with Eckhart Tolle

To read Eckhart Tolle's latest column, please see the current print edition of Common Ground. For copyright reasons, we are authorized to publish this column in our print version only.

JR: In your new book, I feel like you're the modern equivalent of the explorers that came to the new world, but an explorer and documenter of consciousness, discovering a new world.

ET: Yes, discovering is the right word. It's not that you need to make a great effort to attain it or bring it about or acquire it. It's discovering it's already there in you – conscious awareness that's obscured, or partially obscured, in many people. It's a discovery of something already there.

It's like waking up after a dream, because identification with the thinking mind and its stories and the old emotional conditioning is like being immersed in a kind of dream world, which very often turns into a nightmare – acting out old conditioned patterns again and again. The whole structure of the egoic mind is an old dysfunction.

There's some evidence that the ego started about 6,000 years ago, but nobody can say for sure. Before that, humans were in a state of innocence. When we go beyond the dysfunction of the ego, we regain our original innocence, but on a much deeper level. This is why Jesus said unless we become as little children we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, returning to the original innocence, and at the same time going much deeper into that with full awareness – that's the process. We're coming out of thousands of years of dreadful suffering, almost the whole of recorded history of humanity. If you really look at it in an unbiased way, as if you'd never seen it before, one cannot but admit that, to a large extent, 80 to 90 percent of it is a history of pathological insanity, the suffering that humans have created for themselves and, of course, inflicting it upon others.

JR: And exporting it through colonization to the new world.

ET: Yes, so the important part of the awakening process is the realization of the insanity in human history, collectively, to this day playing itself out in world events. Also, to be aware of the insanity within oneself – old, dysfunctional patterns that come again and again that create suffering. So when you see that you're insane, then you're not completely insane. Sanity comes the moment you realize the fact of insanity. To see insanity is not a negative thing.

JR: At least you're out of denial.

ET: Yes, that's why in the film A Beautiful Mind, for example, which is about a mathematical genius who did have a mental dysfunction, his mind was developed in certain areas but he was also insane. The viewer of the film doesn't know that until a certain point when the character realizes that many of his experiences are delusions. At that moment, his healing begins. He's not cured yet, but his healing begins because he's recognized his own insanity. That recognition can only come out of sanity, which is the awareness of unconditioned consciousness.

JR: I remember you saying before you published your last book that the next one would be about why there isn't peace on this planet. Was finding a solution one of the major intentions of A New Earth?

ET: Yes, to see the nature of the major dysfunction. That's why I talk quite a bit about the ego in this book. We need to recognize the nature of the dysfunction. Sometimes, even very great Eastern teachers sometimes neglect that part because they're not really touched by the magnitude of, especially, the Western ego. So it's very important for us to see the dysfunction so that we can recognize it when it arises.

Part of the new book is about recognizing the ego, which I regard as a semi-autonomous energy. It's an energy field. Every thought you think is an energy field. It has a form and then it dissolves and then there is another form. The ego itself is an energy field and it has a collective and individual aspect. Every indi-

vidual ego is part of the collective. They're connected. Every individual is a manifestation of the collective. To recognize that is essential because the ego, being a very clever entity, has many ways of reappearing. Even if you've seen it in one disguise, it can suddenly reappear in a new one.

You might suddenly realize your whole sense of self, identity, is being derived from your possessions and social position. You see that your whole sense of identity is bound up with that and you recognize one aspect of ego. Well, usually it only comes to people when they suffer, when the identification with something no longer works…

It's recognizing the ego in its many disguises. I've met Buddhist monks who had enormous egos without knowing it. I remember being in a monastery afraid to approach them because they seemed so aloof. Yet I've met other Buddhist monks who were like little children and it was a joy to talk to them because they'd laugh and not take themselves seriously at all. They didn't take the whole Buddhist

thing seriously either, yet they practised it knowing it was only a form and they weren't identified with it.

There's a dimension in us that has nothing to do with content. Self-realization is that I am not that. I'm not my story, not my grievances and hang-ups, not the story of me that I'm telling other people at parties or repeating in my head again and again. That is only form. It's temporary.

When you see what you're not, it's already liberating. Something inside you breathes a sigh of relief. Then, of course, the mind begins to ask, "What are you if you are not that?" It wants an answer. In other words, it wants some new form. It wants a new thought. There must be a thought that I am. But it doesn't work like that. That's why the great book the Tao Te Ching starts with the line that the Tao that can be spoken of is not the true Tao because Tao – in the ancient Chinese way of putting it – is the formless dimension. You could say pure consciousness, but with any term we use we have to be careful it's not mistaken for "It." Otherwise, the mind comes in and says, "Oh, consciousness, yes. I believe that I'm consciousness." It's not another belief. It's finding that spaciousness inside yourself that's there when you let go of identification of form.

Excerpted from **Just now: a two-part interview with Eckhart Tolle** by Joseph Roberts. Read the full interview online. Go to www.commonground.ca Click on archives. Click on 2007 at the top of the page. For part one, click on September 2007. For part two, click on October 2007.

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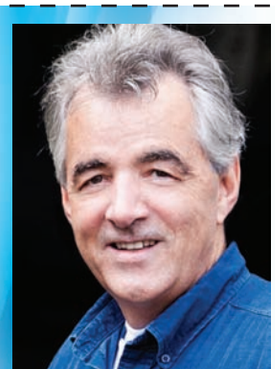

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This time it's different

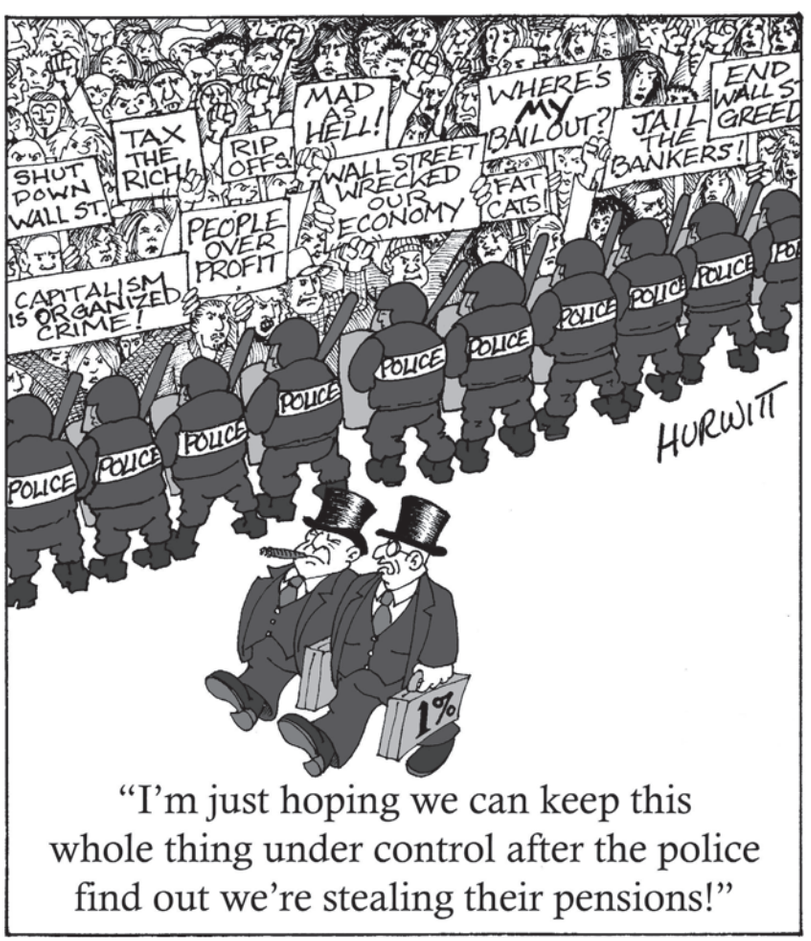
Back in May, when our host Martin LeClair got in touch with me about tonight, he asked if I could be a little bit funny and very educational in an economist sort of way.

So an economics presentation that's supposed to be a little bit funny – how about Alan Greenspan apologizing for destroying the American economy? Or how about the guys that ran the credit default swap team at AIG that lost $61 billion in the first quarter of 2009? How much money is that, $61 billion dollars in 12 weeks? Well, that's $27 million dollars an hour. Losses on a scale that threatened the global banking system were only possible because of the belief that markets are sustainably self-regulating. Funny, like that?

Over the summer, I did put together a short comedy routine to soften my pretty gloomy forecast of the global economy. Gloomy because the economy is compromised by the structural damage from the financial market collapse of 2008, the erosion of trust in countries that make up the Euro zone and disturbing signs that the boom in China is slipping into a slowdown that inevitably will hurt a commodity-based economy like ours.

But the more I thought about what was happening right now with 10-year bond yields breaking to new lows, equities plunging in and out of bear market territory, the political stalemates in the United States and Europe deepening and Cairo-inspired protests gathering pace in the financial capitals of the developed world, I concluded tonight is not a time for comedy.

The time has come to tell ourselves the truth; of where we've been the last 30 years, of where we are right now and of the risks that we face if we don't make the right choices. In my professional life, the nostrums, which economists peddle as insightful description and prescription for our economies and societies, have never failed to amaze me: First, markets are rational. Isn't that funny, if it wasn't so dangerous? Here are some more favourites. Peak oil, commodity prices will stay permanently high, central banks can control prices, economies tend to equilibrium and lower taxes guarantees economic success. The economy is better off unregulated, sovereign debt is always honoured, liberalization of financial markets reduces the risk of a banking crisis, financial firms are great self-regulators and command and control economies are sustainable.



"I'm just hoping we can keep this whole thing under control after the police find out we're stealing their pensions!"

What is becoming clear, as the fabric of our societies are frayed by constant economic crises, is that it is the state on the one hand and civil society on the other standing between individual citizens and the unpredictable forces of global economic change. And nowhere in the developed world is this becoming more obvious than in the United States… anyone travelling in the US today can see the impact of a lack of investment in roads and bridges, airports and railways. The United States may have begun the process of losing a large part of a generation of economic growth.

The Canadian challenge is different. The simple fact is that Canada is geographically vast, sparsely populated, next door to history's most powerful country and has spent two centuries consistently finding peaceful solutions to including a distinct language and cultural population situated in the geographic heart of the country that could leave to make their own and end Canada as we know it.

Canada is a sophisticated, bilingual, peaceful, open, wealthy and increasing urban country whose growth is significantly driven by the success of new Canadians competing in the global economy. Achieving these outcomes has, in part, been made possible by social spending by the state that is larger compared to a country like the United States.

The pivotal elements of competitiveness are mostly determined by sustainable social investment, the quality of the work force, infrastructure, social peace,

> Never has it been more important that we remember the lesson of the Canadian model of compromise, of fairness, of inclusion...

the rule of law and the health of cities. None of this can be built on the assumption that the individual is self-sufficient. The relationship between the state, the society and the individual must be a well-ordered balance. And Canada, better than most, has managed this balance.

Sadly, there is mounting evidence that the Canadian generation that benefitted so much from forward-looking public policy has forgotten this truth. The boomer generation has ignored a four-fold rise in the cost of post-secondary tuition since 1990. The participation rate of children from lower income families in colleges and universities has been dropping over the past decade and these children are 40% less likely to get a post-secondary education than are kids from high-income households, in part because of the cost.

This should not be surprising when the cost of completing an undergraduate university degree in any discipline has been estimated by TD Economics at $84,000 for students living away from home. Although about 50% of students graduate with no debt, the other half graduate with an average of $27,000 in debt.

What's it like for the kid from Smithers, British Columbia, to walk into UBC the first day looking at 150 bucks a pop, geography and sociology textbooks, a $1,000 laptop, in addition to fees, tuition, living and travelling costs that, in one year of university, on average adds up to the annual medium after tax income of a Canadian family? Well, it's not funny, that's for sure.

Equally worrying is the decline in the commitment of universities to provide a quality post-secondary education for the undergraduate students that actually make it there. In a *continued p.29…*

Choosing the high road

Back in the 1970s, Jonas Salk wrote a little book called *The Survival of the Wisest*. This was a shift from the older paradigm of "survival of the fittest." The concept of the fittest surviving was based on strength, force, aggression, competition and win/lose.

In order to survive and thrive, Salk proposed there would have to be an inversion of those old values so that co-operation, understanding and finding win/win solutions replaced the old polarity/adversarial approach. He was envisioning humans evolving in a more positive direction.

Interestingly, evolution of the species can mirror evolution within the individual. Babies are completely self-centred and it takes years for them to learn to share or to consider the impact of their behaviour on others.

Becoming more evolved is not a given. Looking at ourselves and the people in our lives, we can see a variety of evolutionary levels at play. Consider a situation where someone does something another doesn't like. The most primitive response is to beat up or even kill the offender. Still primitive, but a little less so, is a verbal attack. More evolved is to talk it over and try to come to some agreement or peace about the issue.

Evolving consciously is a choice. We can either go through life reacting from ego, much as we did as a child, or we can choose to access our inner wisdom and maturity. We have both capabilities within us. It is not always easy to take the high road, especially when dealing with one who is unevolved.

> How evolved we choose to be has nothing to do with those around us and everything to do with how we choose to be in the world. It is easy to be evolved when all is going well.

What does this look like in everyday life? We are coming from a more primitive, ego-driven place when we find ourselves engaged in blame, judgment, confrontation, polarity, anger, jealousy or any behaviour that is out of integrity.

We are coming from a more evolved place when we demonstrate encouragement, patience, openness, co-operation, helpfulness, kindness and being non-judgmental.

How evolved we choose to be has nothing to do with those around us and everything to do with how we choose to be in the world. It is easy to be evolved when all is going well. The difficult people and situations we encounter offer us the opportunity to practise being true to our highest self.

Ultimately, the most important relationship is the one we have with ourselves. Are we conducting ourselves in ways that, if we look back tomorrow or in 20 years, we can be free of regret? Are we speaking and acting in ways that could be aired on national television?

Choosing to evolve consciously requires we make a commitment to ourselves to not do or say things that are mean, negative, untrue or lacking in integrity. It requires we do this even in the face of temptation to just lash out.

Sometimes, it means we simply have to walk away from the situation or out of someone's life. It requires the courage to let others know we will not participate in gossip or negativity. It may mean we lose friends who are uncomfortable with whom we are becoming.

Evolutionary change must first manifest in some individuals in a species. Some will not, in this lifetime, have the awareness that allows them to make more evolved choices. If you recognize the existence of a higher road, choose to walk that one.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books, CDs and the new "Creating Healthy Relationships" series, visit www.gwen.ca See display ad this issue

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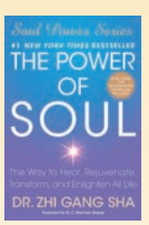
Together, we have the power to heal the world.
– Master Sha, *The Power of Soul*



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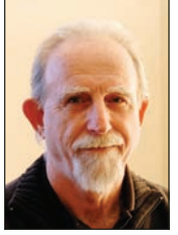

StarWise

January 2012

THE SUN MOVES through Capricorn until January 20. Saturn rules this dynamic Cardinal/Earth sign. The cardinal signs Aries, Cancer, Libra and Capricorn carry great energy, as they are the signs that lead off the seasons. The element of earth gives a practical wisdom along with grit and determination to reach the goal, whatever it may be, for those born under the January skies. Dedication and devotion to the principle of any one thing carry these folks a very long way. Much depends on how they elect to go.

Saturn/Capricorn energy, when filtered positively, produces some of the greatest leaders, deepest thinkers and solid builders of the future, as they work devotedly on securing the present. Judges, lawyers, doctors, bankers, teachers, police officers, military strategists, morticians, farmers, financial planners, realtors, bosses, parents – the list is long, but they usually end up running the show, one way or the other. Saturn/Capricorn energy, when filtered negatively, however, brings the most cruel, tyrannical, manipulative, cunning con men and women to the scene. Cult leader Jim Jones was

ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19
Coal compressed for millions of years becomes a diamond. In a similar process, you are being shaped, chiselled and transformed. Stay open and remain tuned in. Believe in your higher self and in the power of love. 2012 is rocket time, consciousness-wise.

TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21
The stars are leaning in your favour. It is a time of gaining and gathering. Be wise in your choices because what you want may truly manifest this year. Too much of anything is not a good thing. Walk, don't run.

GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20
Get ready for a big year. By mid June, Venus and Jupiter will be in Gemini casting their fine rays of love, happiness and abundance your way. Travel and excellent opportunities await thee. Please don't wait around though. Set yourself free now.

CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22
Life's lessons deepen and in its way so does your love and gratitude for all that has come your way. Important revelations take place as the Cancer full Moon on January 8 takes hold. A very dynamic year is predicted. Make the best of it.

LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22
I can almost hear those wheels turning in your head as you plan your debut into 2012. Your solar chart is heating up nicely, especially in the career and money sectors. Love may not be a stranger and your writing gene has become activated.

VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22
Don your helmet and shoulder pads and make ready for the scrum. Mars and Jupiter cast their dynamic energies into your sign bringing courage, strength, stamina and a whole lot to do. Go easy though as accidents and incidents could take place.

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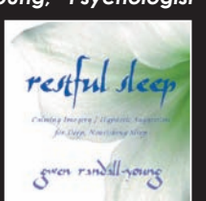

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a Taurus, but he had Saturn rising in Capricorn and fed his drug-fuelled, fear-based paranoia to his hapless followers and we know the outcome. Tricky Dicky and J. Edgar Hoover are another pair of Capricorns that got hold of power in the US and much suffering ensued. The list is long and if you look around, you will find Capricorns in positions and pockets of power and authority.

The Sea Goat is an apt totem for Capricorn, as it represents the dual activities of material acquisition and spiritual devotion. One without the other represents imbalance. Astrology's value and usefulness lies within its capacity to predict what type of energy will unfold at any given time in one's life or in the life of a nation. In ancient times, the fate of a nation was reflected through the birth chart of its leader. Here are a couple of predictions we can observe in January of 2012: US President Barack Obama's chart is radiating serious danger and it may spell some type of incident, accident, clash or conflict for the American people or for the man himself. Tiger Woods is also in a very dangerous and highly precarious time in which some type of accident, incident or controversy may be reported in the news. His chart shows struggle until 2013 after which he will rise again to the top of the heap in the sports world, if he survives the dangers of the times. .

LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22
The new Moon on January 22 takes place in the house of children, business, entertainment and romance. These are the topics that should come into play in the ensuing days. Home, family and real estate are also topics on the menu this month.

SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21
When your birthday rolls along, you might realize a lot has changed this year. It is time to do the behind the scenes work of repair and preparation for the future. "A stitch in time saves nine" is an apt rhyme for the times.

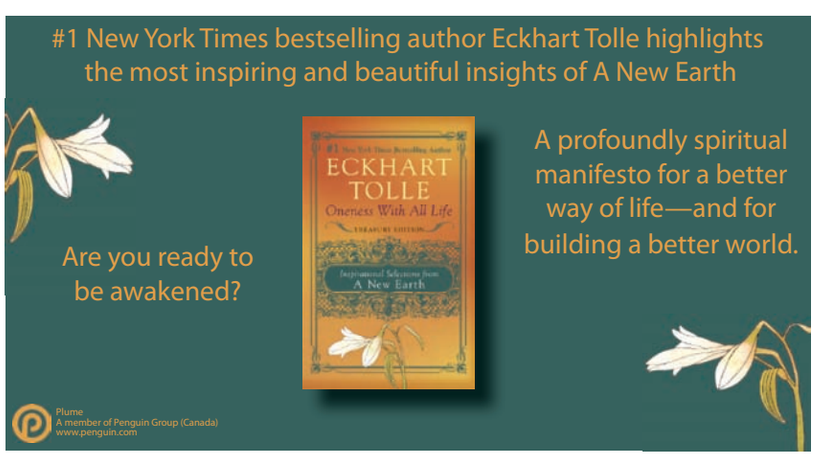
SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21
The Archer's success depends upon his ability to concentrate, focus, aim and release. It's that type of year for you. Your instincts drive you towards perfection, which you may achieve if you get your ducks lined up properly in a row.

CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19
You're in your solar high of the year, whilst Lord Saturn sits exalted in Libra. It's good news and you can hardly lose. Pardon me. You could lose if you abuse any particular thing, especially power or any type of leadership role.

AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19
The new Moon on January 22 heralds the start of a lively time. It is a time of learning and gathering. Soon, all that you have garnered can flow easily from the urn on your shoulder. The long-term Neptunian fog is finally lifting its veil.

PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20
With fiery Mars moving ever so slowly in your opposite sign Virgo, you may sense quite a bit of tension, dissention and some frustration that will have to be endured in the next few months. On the other hand, excitement, merriment and adventure await thee.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109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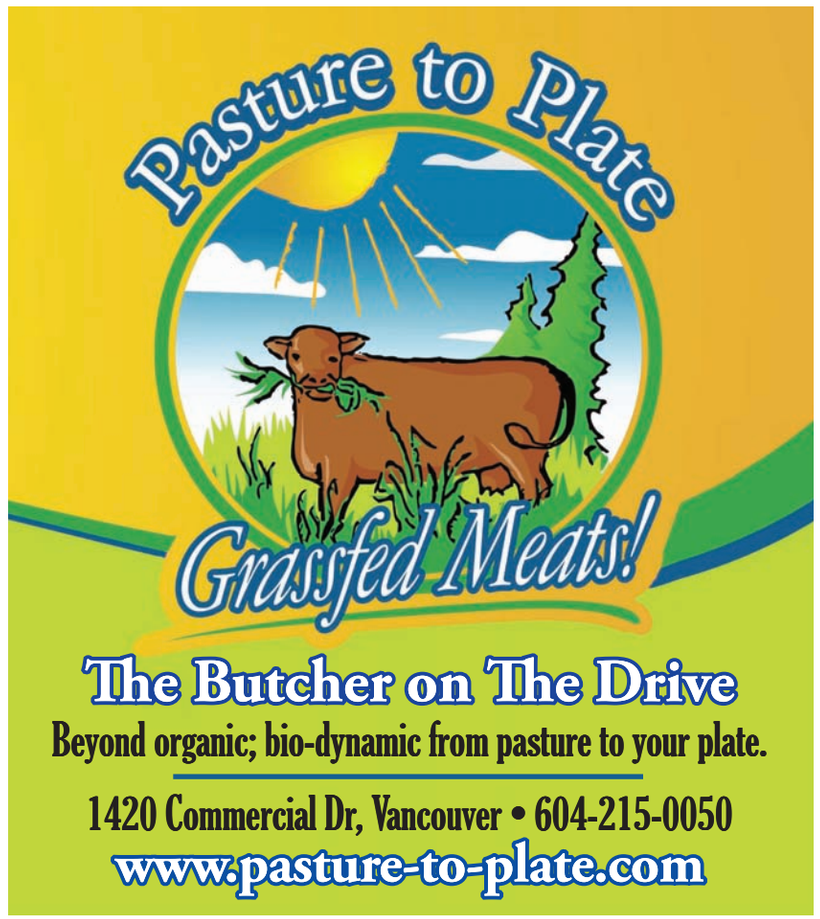
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2012 offers infinite possibilities

On January 23, 2012, we move out of the Chinese Year of the Rabbit into the prosperous and fertile Year of the Dragon. Dragons represent potent and benevolent power as the ultimate ruler of all the elements, embodying primordial power as a catalyst for change and transformation, wisdom, infinity, longevity and movement through space.

It is critical that we adapt our way of living and eliminate out-of-date practices that hinder the brilliant future of our planet, our galaxy and the entire universe. Research undertaken by cosmologist and inventor Nassim Haramein has created a "Unified Field Theory." This information can change our lives on Earth dramatically, as it unlocks deep levels of understanding of human existence through an exploration of the geometric structure of the universe and human consciousness.

The unified field is the space we occupy. No matter how big or small, all matter we observe is made of atoms and all atoms are of 99.99999% space. Physicists use math to describe the universe and the nature of reality through the language of equations. We can improve our understanding of the fundamentals of our universe when we understand the geometry of the fabric of the vacuum and the dynamics of space-time within that structure.

This is a critical period in our evolution where we can come into coherency and harmony with nature instead of destroying our environment as we interact with it and transform our society from scarcity consciousness to abundance.

We live in the perfect organization of a holographic and non-linear fractal universal structure. We are a reflection of the abundance of mother Earth; like her, we are self-sustaining. The anxiety we feel as a human race is a direct result of the stress of living within the confines of a box of a closed system. Stress can be better defined as the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of misinformation and acceptance of living within the confines of a mistaken identity as limited beings confined within a limited structure. There are no closed systems in nature. What appears to be an isolated system is actually connected to an infinite amount of information. We are in effect, a container of the infinite potential of the entire universe.

Our society, as a whole, tends to embrace looking outside of ourselves for answers, based on expansion and radiation instead of contraction – exploding fuel-filled rockets instead of floating hot air balloons.

The Year of the Dragon is a perfect opportunity to break out of the box in our search for creative solutions by going towards the centre and using our intuition to find answers from within. We are invincible if we harness our collective power to command our energies toward the inevitability of a peaceful harmonious existence, through breakthroughs in enlightenment rather than disaster.

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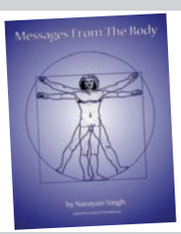

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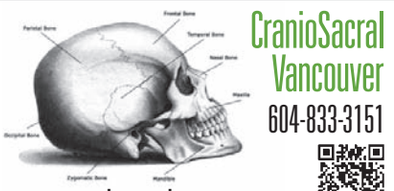

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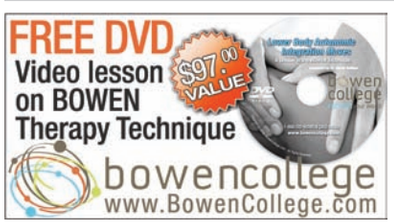

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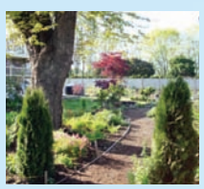
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*...**Canadian** from pg. 18*

scathing editorial in the *Globe and Mail*… it was argued that high class sizes, 'indentured' doctoral students and poorly paid sessionals acting in the place of absent professors and the low emphasis put on teaching when 'publish or perish' remains the mantra at top ranked universities, has resulted in a steep decline in quality. In the words of economists, the real cost of a post-secondary education has skyrocketed, short-changing Canada's future by short changing its students.

At the same time, students are graduating into a globalized job market with a decade of debt to pay off, whether they studied philosophy, literature, history, dance, Greek or engineering. In Canada for example, despite the evidence that, on the whole, an 'investment' in a post-secondary education does pay off over a person's lifetime, the reality is that 20% of graduates earn less than half of Canada's median income. Hmm, I guess those are the under-achieving philosophy majors.

Of note, ladies, when the payoff does come, it is skewed to favour men over women; a man with a post-secondary degree, on average, will earn about 35% more during their work lifetime than you only because you are not male and the last time I checked, tuition was not adjusted for gender; at least not But all of this is beside the point. The very fact that a post-secondary degree is a life or death requirement for a sustainable middle income Canadian lifestyle is all the more reason to ensure that a world class post-secondary education is accessible in Canada, without the financial headwinds that have built up and gathered force over the past two decades.

We've made an enormous error approaching post-secondary education mostly as an economic investment. This only helps justify the argument that students should 'pay up for it' rather than viewing education as a vital process that shapes thoughtful and engaged citizens armed with a broad range of skills. Sadly, over the last 20 years we've only made the chance for a post-secondary education less equal than it otherwise would be. Well, shame on us.

In conclusion, never has it been more important that we remember the lesson of the Canadian model of compromise, of fairness, of inclusion, of consumer protection and of the effort to give every citizen the equality of chance, creating, in the words of my wife of 26 years, who also happens to be of Japanese origin, "the happy country." It is in our power to manage the opportunities of globalization, powerful technologies and the new economic success of other countries.

Of all the voices that must seize this chance in this critical moment in our history, none are more important than those right here in this room, you financial market professionals. We owe it to ourselves and our fellow citizens to advocate that social justice and the economy are two sides of the same coin.

The most healthy and sustainable societies manage to achieve the vital but delicate balance between the twin virtues of equality of opportunity and inequality of outcome from which emerges a civil society ultimately freer from both the state and the market.

In that place, the only currency that matters is the moral obligation between empathic citizens all sharing the same community.

Thank you.

Excerpted from a speech entitled **This Time is Different** by **Paul Summerville**, delivered to the Canadian Pension Benefits Institute in Ottawa, October 20, 2011. Paul Summerville is an adjunct professor at the Peter Gustavson School of Business at the University of Victoria. Email pasummer@uvic.ca
Read the full text online at
www.commonground.ca

Geoff Olson

Marketing nostalgia

From *The Big Chill* to boxed sets and beyond

photo © Regjen Paassen

It's extraordinary how potent cheap music is.
– Noel Coward

Nostalgia strikes when you least expect it. You're sitting in a café putzing away on your smart phone when some long-forgotten tune comes on the radio in the background. Suddenly, you're caught in a Proustian tractor beam and boarding the mothership of memory.

Song supplies a key that opens the door to the past. This implies there is a keyhole somewhere in the brain. According to some neuroscientists – and there is a long-running academic debate about this – everything we've ever heard is encoded holographically in our nervous systems. In the early sixties, Canadian neurologist Wilder Penfield explored the brains of patients with severe epilepsy in search of causes for their disease. He would stimulate the exposed brain tissue in fully conscious patients and by observing the patient's response, as the electrode was moved gently from point to point over the temporal lobe, he was often able to pinpoint the area of damage responsible for seizures. Occasionally, he would alight on a spot where the patient would experience an extraordinarily vivid scene from the past, a voice or a fragment of music. If Penfield stimulated the exact spot a second time, the recollection would repeat, like a vinyl disc scratched by a DJ.

We've all experienced a moment where a piece of music has teleported us back to some joyful or painful time in our lives. This budget time travel can even be instigated by a disliked song or an advertising jingle. The brain is promiscuous when it comes to musical attachments. Personally, I will forever associate Paul Young's *Every Time You Go Away* with dental work, ever since a Richmond dentist hummed it all the way through a root canal.

Music will often conjure up a complex constellation of feelings, with an attached sense of longing or loss. We call this sense "nostalgia," a Greek word combining *nostos* (returning home) and *algos* (pain or ache). The term "nostalgia" was coined by 17th century Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in his medical dissertation as an umbrella term for symptoms displayed by Swiss mercenaries in the service of European monarchs. When they were stationed far from the Alps, the mercenaries apparently fell prey to a morbid state of homesickness. Hofer described the illness as a "continuous vibration of animal spirits through those fibres of the middle brain in which the impressed traces of ideas of the Fatherland still cling."

As noted by psychologist Charles A. Zwingmann, "to ward off [this debilitating] nostalgia, Swiss soldiers were forbidden to play, sing or even whistle Alpine tunes" because Alpine melodies haunted the listener with "an image of the past which is at once definite and unattainable." Nostalgia was regarded as the soul's yearning for a home to which the sufferer could no longer return. (You might say the 17th century Swiss mercenaries were the world's first emo kids.)

You might not be able to go home again – in the sense of returning to the vanished world of your youth – but thanks to digital technology, the soundtrack of your life is always on tap.

Musical nostalgia in its current form is a joint discovery of the American music and film industries. The founding document is the 1984 film *The Big Chill*, which starred an ensemble of A-list Hollywood actors as a group of supernaturally droll and attractive boomers who gather at a weekend memorial for a dead friend. This was one of the first Hollywood films that did not commission theme music. Instead, director Lawrence Kasdan put on his hardhat and took a trip down the pop cultural mineshaft. Rock classics like Marvin Gaye's *I Heard It Through the Grapevine* and The Temptations' *My Girl* lent the film a depth and resonance it might have otherwise lacked.

With *The Big Chill*, it was like the entertainment industry had discovered a whole new continent. On Hollywood's side, there was the big box office effect of attaching musical nostalgia to blockbuster films. On the music industry's side, it was a double win: songs leased to Hollywood productions could revive the radio play and resale of old hits.

This was back in the glory days of vinyl albums, well before the balance-sheet terrors of CD ripping and digital downloading. Today, with their profits under siege, music labels are pushing musical nostalgia through a different angle: boxed sets. I'm talking about those multidisc packages that honour an artist's entire career, complete with b-sides, bootlegs, big hits, live versions and filmed performances.

In 1990, Atlantic Records repackaged Led Zeppelin's greatest hits as six vinyl albums or four compact discs, in a stunning boxed set decorated with crop circles. 1995 saw the release of *The Beatles Anthology*, in which a collection of tinny demos found in the vaults of the BBC seeded a television documentary series, three double albums and a book focusing on moptop history. Over the next two decades, the packaging of boxed sets became increasingly elaborate, the multimedia spin-offs more impressive and the prices stiffer. (Elvis Costello recently discouraged fans from buying his compilation, *The Return of the Spectacular Spinning Songbook*, calling its $249.00 price tag "either a misprint or a satire.")

Yet these past efforts are chump change compared to EMI's recent remastering of Pink Floyd's catalogue. From the PR blurb, it sounds like the marketing equivalent of the Normandy invasion, featuring "CD's, DVDs Blu-ray discs, an array of digital for-

mats, viral marketing, iPhone Apps and a brand-new single album "Best Of" collection."

The marketing angle is to convince Floyd purists this seductive package is a need, rather than a want, while persuading file-sharing freeloaders their mp3 Floyd collections sound like AM radio tracks broadcast through mercury amalgam fillings. The Discovery Box Set contains all 14 digitally remastered Floyd albums, for the grand price of $175. Or if you prefer, you can purchase each album separately, in either the entry "Experience" format or the full-scale "Immersion" format. The $113 "Immersion" format of *Wish You Were Here* includes live and unreleased tracks on five discs, including SACD and vinyl LP, plus booklets and even a freaking scarf. (No word yet if the "Immersion" version of Roger Waters' bummer classic, *The Wall* – $119, seven discs, available February – will come with a bag of weed to take off the misanthropic edge.)

> You might not be able to go home again – in the sense of returning to the vanished world of your youth – but thanks to digital technology, the soundtrack of your life is always on tap.

Who knows? Perhaps the boxed sets of the future will come with nanotechnology and gene-splicing kits, allowing fans to grow miniaturized musical artists like sea monkeys. The next generation will be able to grow their own itsy-bitsy Pink Floyds, with tiny roadies rebuilding *The Wall* out of packing peanuts.

Take it from me, if you have a car, you already have a Pink Floyd boxed set; it's called a radio. David Gilmour's guitar workout *Money* has been in AM radio rotation since I was in tube socks. Don't get me wrong; I'm a fan of the band myself. I just keep my enthusiasm to subclinical levels. Rock stars and rappers are the closest things we have to religious figures in secular culture and boxed sets are the marketing equivalent of church reliquaries containing the fragments of saints. Of course, not everyone's a saint or interested in owning a piece of one. These productions are mostly limited to musical acts beloved by boomers, the principal target demographic. They're the only folks who can honestly afford this sort of archival overkill.

We're a long, long way from that famous pre-punk moment in 1975 when John Lydon walked into rock impresario Malcolm McLaren's London boutique wearing a tattered T-shirt with the words "I hate" scrawled above "Pink Floyd." You'd think the wall-eyed former lead singer of the Sex Pistols would prove resistant to the nostalgia biz. Not so. When nostalgia combines with the preservation industry, even punk rockers are found to have a stately charm.

Exhibit A: Last month, British archaeologists expressed their delight at the discovery of some graffiti behind cupboards in a London apartment. Not just any apartment, but one once rented by the Sex Pistols. The graffiti – consisting of eight childlike scribbles by John Lydon (aka Johnny Rotten) – is "a direct and powerful representation of a radical and dramatic movement of rebellion," according to Dr. John Schofield at the department of archaeology, University of York and independent researcher Dr. Paul Graves-Brown. In the latest edition of the journal *Antiquity*, the two argue the graffiti is worthy of archaeological investigation and historical preservation.

Dr. Schofield writes, "The tabloid press once claimed that early Beatles recordings discovered at the BBC were the most important archaeological find since Tutankhamen's tomb. The Sex Pistols' graffiti in Denmark Street surely ranks alongside this and – to our minds – usurps it."

With a bit of luck and heritage society finagling, the London flat will become the punk rock version of the Lascaux Caves. It only goes to show if you allow a pop culture artifact enough time, it will age into respectable, preservation-worthy status, like a Charles Manson doodle on *Antiques Roadshow*. The surviving punkers are old enough to prefer PIN safety over safety pins and the "Immersion" set of *Dark Side of the Moon* might as well come packaged with Depends. The boomers and Gen-Xers are now the museum-going class and like any other generation, we love any new discovery that puts a spotlight on the soundtrack to our glorious youth.

There is something poignant about the impulse to archive the pop culture past into gallery items and fetish objects. There is great artistry in some of these works and their archival collection is meant, in a certain sense, to ward off time. A song that survives its composer is the closest thing we have in the material world to a tangible spirit (or, at least, the acoustic tracing of a vanished temperament). It's little wonder we attach a sense of the sacred to music, whether it be Gregorian chants or Seattle grunge.

When you are completely absorbed in a task, a sport, making a piece of art or lovemaking, you are 'not there.' This sense of timelessness is most evident with music, in either its performance or its appreciation. The player merges with the played and the listener with the listened. This timeless dimension of music was captured perfectly in a BBC documentary entitled *Prisoner of Consciousness*. Musicologist Clive Wearing was stricken with a severe brain inflammation that left him with a memory span of just a few seconds. Without a recognizable past or an imaginable future, Clive Wearing told his wife his purgatorial life was "like being dead." Although he can never remember his wife, he is thrilled each time he sees her.

This is not a man capable of nostalgia, at least not in the usual sense. When he is asked to play a composition by Bach, Wearing initially says he doesn't know any. Yet he manages to summon up a prelude by the composer when he is at a piano. In examining Wearing, Dr. Oliver Sacks proposed that musical recall is not quite like another kind of memory: "Remembering music is not, in the usual sense, remembering at all… Listening to it or playing it is entirely in the present," he writes in his book *Musicophilia*.

There are well-known health benefits from music, for both the healthy and the sick. Even non-speaking patients with brain damage can sometimes be brought to energetic vocal life with music. Sacks notes how remarkable it is that, even in the worst cases of dementia, "there is still a self to be called upon, even if music, and only music, can do the calling." The best music resonates with what's deepest inside us.

Carl Jung once lamented to a colleague he had "failed to open people's eyes that man has a soul – a buried treasure in the field." If you're a big music fan, you may prefer to think of the soul as a boxed set.

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JAN 14, JAN 28
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Year of the Water Dragon

by Kit Wong

In Chinese Mythology, the Dragon has always been an auspicious sign. Its symbolism is often related to or signifies Heavenly Energies and Imperial Decrees or both. The Belief that there are four Dragon Kings in the four corners of the World, charged with regulating the flow of water, in the form of rainfall, rivers, lakes, streams, and even wells is significant to the relation of the element with the mythical

creature. With water, being the life source of most living things, the Dragon's influence means it affects the regulation and flow of life. Seeing that Dragon is a Yang Force, or representation of Dynamic Energies, and it's linked to the element of water – the life giving force, it can be seen as an auspicious time to expect a deluge of energies. But like the water rapids, expect some wild rides ahead in 2012, economically, politically and romantically. Expect fresh innovation, but also historically watershed (no pun intended) moments, and stagnancy is not an issue.

The Water Dragon, seen as a lucky sign for the most part also displays traits of sustainability and longevity. 1952 was the last time the Water Dragon made an appearance in a once-a-60 year cycle. It demarcated the coronation of UK's Queen Elizabeth II in February of that year, for a period that moves from the 20th to the 21st century, and she is still reigning today. In November that same year, Agatha Christie's Mousetrap opened in London, its successful run, in retrospect, earned it the record holder for the longest, continuously running production of a play in modern history.

This sense of lasting power or leaving an indelible mark on society can be seen as good for some and perhaps more ominous for others. In 1952, the United States of America brought two new innovations to the 20th century: the hydrogen bomb and the B-52 Bomber, two of the most destructive weapons for use in conflicts. In December of that year, a toxic killer-fog descended over the city of London, requiring us to come up with a new term in eco-disaster: "Smog".

But as ancient Taoist Philosophy teaches, all things in the world are comprised of the dynamic interplays of forces Positive and Negative, so it may hearten some to know that the field of medicine saw the first successful separation of conjoined twins at Mt Sinai hospital in Cleveland, Ohio. Throughout history parents in China

dragon image © Nikolai Sorokin

water dragon photo © Vitaly Korovin

and Asian communities have hoped to give birth during Dragon years. In the last period of Water Dragon in 1952 the birth of world leaders in politics were Russia's Vladimir Putin and Singapore's Lee Hsien Loong. In Sports, we had tennis luminary Jimmy Connors, and four-time super bowl winning coach Bill Belichick. In the corporate and business world 1952 gave us the most Water Dragons that dominate the world of business, offering us a host of CEOs from companies such as Exxon-Mobil, Alberto-Culver, Time Warner, Colgate- Palmolive, Viacom, UPS, Radio Shack, Clorox, Tiffany & Company, Hershey, ITT, Macy's, Walgreens to name a few, with Craigslist Founder Craig Newmark, who has reshaped the world of advertising and Anne M. Mulcahy, former chairwoman and chief executive officer of Xerox Corporation, and Muhtar Kent, current CEO of Coca Cola.

Year of the Dragon 2012 is the fifth in the series following the Rabbit and recur every twelfth year with five elements effecting each dragon year differently. The date of each Chinese New Year varies with this one beginning January 23.

Others who have entered in during the Year of the Dragon are Bruce Lee, John Lennon, Shirley Temple, Kirk Douglas, Ringo Starr, Martin Luther King, Joan of Arc, Robin Williams, Salvador Dali, Helen Keller, Charles Darwin, Maya Angelou, Dr. Seuss, Mae West, and Florence Nightingale.

Thus, in retrospect, we can infer a sense that 2012 could very well be an unforgettable year. Let us all strive to harness the energies that the Water Dragon brings, and effect positive changes in our life and the lives of others. Happy New Year!

dragon photo © Martyn Unsworth

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Breaking boundaries

Dancers perform in Wim Wenders' *Pina*

Two films due to open this month bring the wizardry of digital cinema to the arthouse with stunning results. Firstly, there's Wim Wenders' *Pina 3D*, a portrait of the work of the celebrated German choreographer Pina Bausch (due out January 27).

Pina was a film that almost didn't get made. On June 30, 2009, only two days before the planned 3D rehearsal shoot, its subject Pina Bausch suddenly died. After a period of mourning, Wenders decided to go ahead with a "memoir," showcasing Bausch's theatrical choreography and the muscular grace of the dancers from Bausch's internationally diverse Tanztheater Wuppertal.

The core of the film – and where the 3D cinematography really comes into its own – is the live performances of four of Bausch's choreographed pieces. The 3D gives the stage depth and, at times, it's almost like being among the performers. The dancing is mesmerizing, from the explosive, shape-shifting movement of the opening *The Rite of Spring*, performed on a carpet of peat, to the exuberant *Vollmond* where the dancers cavort on a stage swimming with water (a stage electrician's nightmare, no doubt).

Archive footage of Bausch performing her signature piece, the minimalist *Café Müller*, with its at times scrabbly, fidgety movement, is juxtaposed with a later 3D performance. In the fourth piece, *Kontakthof*, the filmmaker's hand is much in evidence with jump cuts between different generations of performers mid-performance.

Bausch rarely gave verbal advice (the occasions she did are cherished by the dancers like gold nuggets). She preferred to show. Similarly, Wenders has the dancers express themselves in movement – in a street, a factory, a swimming pool or in a woodland with a leaf-blower blasting – accentuating their otherworldliness. I came out of this film thinking I really must see more dance.

The second film breaking new boundaries is *The Mill and the Cross*, which steps inside the 1564 painting *The Way to Calvary* by Flemish master Pieter Bruegel. The painting/film sets Christ's crucifixion in Flanders during a period of thuggish Spanish repression (due out January 6).

Polish director Lech Majewski's imagining, based on the book by Michael Francis Gibson, tells the stories of a dozen characters from the busy canvas of 500 individuals. The script, which uses little dialogue, stays loyal to the spirit of the painting: surreal scenes take us inside the windmill, featured atop a high precipice in the painting and Bruegel (Rutger Hauer) describes to his friend and art collector Nicholas Jonghelinck (Michael York) how he has painted the tragedy of religious persecution epitomized by the figure of the Virgin Mary (a mournful Charlotte Rampling).

Majewski used different techniques to merge art and real life. Actors were shot against a blue screen so they could be superimposed later in craggy landscapes shot on location as well as against a large version of Bruegel's work (painted by Majewski). The stylized backdrop is sufficiently subtle that your awareness of being "in" the painting ebbs and flows. It's an unusual film, but rewarding.

Robert Alstead writes at www.2020Vancouver.com

...***Facts*** *from p.12*

under the euphemism "Progressive Licensing." Progressive Licensing would add new post market surveillance it says, yet working to speed up drug approvals for its industry 'partners'. Many of the drugs taken off the market were 'fast track' approvals. We don't rush air traffic controllers because that would be dangerous and we should not rush drug approvals, period.

There is a career track at Health Canada for senior bureaucrats, which includes taking an early pension and then starting a new job in industry. One decision made by a drug reviewer or senior Health Canada official can mean more than $100 million a year in sales for one drug (i.e. Losec).

Health Canada has refused to enforce the rules against Direct to Consumer Advertising of prescription drugs in Canada, ads which use fear to drive patients into doctors' offices to demand the most expensive new drugs that may or may not help them, but which have new adverse effects. Research has proven most doctors will give their patients these drugs.

From 2000, the name Health Protection Branch disappeared from use and Marketed Health Products Directorate took its place. Health Canada went from protecting Canadians to helping the drug companies market drugs to them.

When a drug is injuring or killing patients or gets bad publicity, officials at Health Canada and the pharmaceutical companies exchange notes so our regulators are directed what to say to the media about the drug by the people who make and sell it.

Health Canada does not routinely investigate why drugs kill patients. It tracks the adverse drug reaction reports on their website. That's like a police officer filling out crime reports and never investigating them.

Health Canada does not order risky or dangerous drugs off the market although no responsible Minister of Health would refuse to take bureaucratic direction on such an action. Instead they 'negotiate' the fine print on safety warnings and the drug labels to help keep the drugs on the market, knowing most doctors never read them.

From article in To Your Health newsletter October 2011 by Citizens for Choice in Health Care Association, www.citizensforchoice.com

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